CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

Interview of **ED MEYERS**
Conducted by **BETTY KING**

Ed Meyers joined Marion Barry's staff at the beginning of home rule in January 1975 as Staff Director of the DC Council Committee on Finance and Revenue which Barry chaired, and later was Barry's chief of staff on the Council. In Mayor Barry's administrations, he served in such jobs as Deputy Director of Finance and Revenue, Director of Policy, Director of Communications and deputy to DC's Anti-Drug Czar, Sterling Tucker. Ed served under three mayors as a member of the DC Public Service Commission.

October 9, 2015

ED MEYERS: Hi, Betty. How are you doing?

BETTY KING: Great. We'll begin. Today is October 9th, 2015. My name is Betty King, and I'm talking to Ed Meyers.

Ed, when did you come to the District?

ED MEYERS: In 1974, at some point. I was working for—in the Walter Washington [Mayor of the District of Columbia] administration, as my job was Productivity Coordinator with the District.

BETTY KING: And so you came to the District in order to work for the District Government, or you came here and then found work?

ED MEYERS: No, I came here because I got a job offer.

BETTY KING: And where had you been before?

ED MEYERS: I was at the University of California, system-wide, in Berkeley, California.

BETTY KING: Working for the—

ED MEYERS: The nine campuses at the time.

BETTY KING: I see. And when did you meet Marion Barry?

ED MEYERS: Well, I was actually going to go back. I wasn't thrilled with that job in D.C. It was okay, you know, no complaints, really, but California did—and still has, to some degree—it had a lot of appeal to me—has a lot of appeal to me. And I got a couple job offers, one with the

state legislature and one with the University of California, the Berkeley campus. And so, on the way out, I stopped by to talk with a fellow named Ivanhoe Donaldson [Barry's Chief of Staff, later manager of Barry's 1978 campaign].

BETTY KING: Now, where had you met Ivanhoe?

ED MEYERS: He approached me. I don't know that I really applied. I don't know how that happened, to tell you the truth. It's just too long ago. But I talked with him, and he says, "Ed, you can't possibly turn this down." And I thought about it, and he was right.

BETTY KING: So what was the job that he was offering you?

ED MEYERS: It was Staff Director—the first Staff Director of the Committee on Finance and Revenue for the D.C. Council.

BETTY KING: Of which Marion Barry was the chairperson in the first Council.

ED MEYERS: Yeah. He was about ready to take over that job. The committee assignments had already been dealt out. He got that one, which is a nice one. Still is.

BETTY KING: Oh, terrific!

ED MEYERS: Yeah. And so, let's see, now. Go ahead. I'm sorry.

BETTY KING: No, no. So, Ivanhoe called you and then said you can't go back to California—

ED MEYERS: Yeah.

BETTY KING: —and you have to do this.

ED MEYERS: And he was right. The jobs were terrific out in California, and I did miss California. You know, every time I saw a pigeon, I wish it had been a seagull. You know what I mean?

BETTY KING: Yes, I do.

ED MEYERS: And so—for some reason, as a kid, even, I was taken with the Civil Rights movement, and it meant everything to me. And so here was Marion Barry, who was—as I recall, he was first national chairman of SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Stokely [Carmichael] was, what, third? And so, you know, he had been hosed down, thrown in jail, and he was the head of PRIDE, the local [youth training and] jobs organization on U Street in D.C. And so, I just thought about it. I asked myself, "Who are you?" It came up that I've got to stay here; I've got to try this.

BETTY KING: So you became the Staff Director for the committee?

ED MEYERS: Yeah. And when I met Marion, it was a nice meeting, but Ivanhoe always got his way. I mean, there's just no doubt about that.

BETTY KING: Right. We all know that. [Laughs.]

ED MEYERS: And by the time I came in to meet him, you could tell from the first words that the way was paved for me to get that job.

BETTY KING: Yeah. How long did you serve in that capacity?

ED MEYERS: It was a few years, '75 January to—before the campaign started.

BETTY KING: In '78, you mean?

ED MEYERS: Yeah. Because when Ivanhoe moved over to become campaign manager, I took his job, which was Chief of Staff to Marion Barry.

BETTY KING: I see. So, he moved over, I think, at the end of '77 at the latest, something like that.

ED MEYERS: Yeah, so whenever that was.

BETTY KING: Okay. Now, during the campaign of 1978—did you participate in any way in Marion's election in '74 to the City Council the first time?

ED MEYERS: No.

BETTY KING: Or his reelection in '76?

ED MEYERS: Not really. Just from the standpoint of—

BETTY KING: Actually, as a civil servant, you were probably barred from—

ED MEYERS: I wasn't a civil—I don't know whether I was a civil servant. I was hardly ever a civil servant.

BETTY KING: You were. I'm sorry to tell you. [Laughs.]

ED MEYERS: Well, on the PSC [Public Service Commission], was that civil service? I mean, it wasn't—it didn't have any protection.

BETTY KING: No. You serve at the pleasure of the mayor, but still you're a government employee.

ED MEYERS: Yeah. So, that's kind of the civil service?

BETTY KING: I think so. Okay. So, 1978 comes. Ivanhoe goes over to become campaign manager. Marion is running for mayor.

ED MEYERS: Right.

BETTY KING: What are your recollections about that campaign, and did you play a role in it and so forth?

ED MEYERS: Well, I'll just get my role out of the way first, before getting into some of the intriguing details of that campaign. My role was not really campaigning per se. It was on the legislative side, building a record that could be appreciated in D.C. to help give him a basis for running and winning, and so we did all kinds of stuff; for example, the homeowner's exemption that everybody still has; many, many senior citizen tax breaks; the classified property tax system, which residents benefited from. And Marion showed me the importance of politicking in the broadest sense of the word. So, even with the classified property tax system, which increased taxes on business, we had a very close relationship with the Board of Trade. They weren't the enemy of this Civil Rights worker leader. They were part of the whole D.C. that had to be worked with, not co-opted, but respected.

BETTY KING: Yeah.

ED MEYERS: And so we worked with them to get their approval of all of the tax system [changes]. The biggest thing was fighting [DC Mayor] Walter Washington, which was a huge campaign coup on Walter Washington's budget, which was bloated, which had all kinds of tax increases that people couldn't stand. Maybe it went over okay on the parts of D.C. that he ultimately won, east of the river and so forth, but in most—

BETTY KING: But I presume, therefore, that the tax increases were on businesses and—

ED MEYERS: Everybody. People. Income tax is everything.

BETTY KING: And he won [wards] 7 and 8 because he was going to increase taxes?

ED MEYERS: Well, there's not a—there weren't a whole lot of income taxes to be paid.

BETTY KING: Okay.

ED MEYERS: Maybe a little better today. So, a tax increase is going to have a net benefit accruing back to the wards.

BETTY KING: Yeah.

ED MEYERS: Potentially.

BETTY KING: I see. Okay.

ED MEYERS: But, anyway, it was considered to be a pro east-of-the-river move, but everywhere else, it was abhorrent to people, that with the reputation of D.C. Government, which was not high, that more money would go out of my pocket—D.C. resident speaking—into that government? No way! And so, we fought it. I did the tax side—and as usual, but the hero in this was Ivanhoe. And Ivanhoe was just magnificent because what he did was he went around to all the councilmembers and their staffs and got buy-in for it, and so all I had to do was make the numbers work. But he made the numbers work on the budget side. I had the easy job. I just had to fool around with the tax system, call people at Finance and Revenue, figure out how it worked. And there were a lot of people in Finance and Revenue who talked off the record and said, "Now, don't tell anybody I'm helping you on this, but here's what you do to make it work." So, my job was easy, but the bottom line was that it was a major accomplishment for D.C. to change the budget direction, but also for Marion Barry.

BETTY KING: Yeah. So, that was one of—this is all in advance of and during the '78 campaign.

ED MEYERS: It was part of the campaign, even though there was a wall, a curtain—

BETTY KING: Of course.

ED MEYERS: —that you can't cross over.

BETTY KING: No, no. But I mean—

ED MEYERS: But there were other things too, like fighting for nonresident income tax. Very popular.

BETTY KING: Of course. Still is.

ED MEYERS: Showing—you know, we had a whole big paper that we put out there that the press in particular ate up because it showed the unfairness of providing all of these services, particularly the low income and other kind of services that the suburbs had zoned out. In other words, they exclusively took the measure of keeping poverty inside D.C., and under federal rule of D.C., they didn't mind putting low-income people in D.C. Now, of course, we're pro low-income people, pro everybody, so it wasn't a—

BETTY KING: But, I mean, that situation hasn't changed. There still is no nonresident income tax.

ED MEYERS: There's no nonresident tax, and that's Congress' fault.

BETTY KING: Of course.

ED MEYERS: Every state in the United States of America that has the ability to tax the income of nonresidents coming in and working—and then that state gets a credit. They get a credit, so they don't pay extra.

BETTY KING: No.

ED MEYERS: And so they get a credit on their home state income tax, but it's money taken out of the Virginia and Maryland coffers.

BETTY KING: So they've stopped it.

ED MEYERS: So they stopped it, and they can do that because we don't have a vote in Congress.

[Laughter.]

BETTY KING: Right.

ED MEYERS: So they're going to win that battle, and then, you know, other things—there's just one more I'll mention before moving on to the campaign itself. We had this—at the time, the D.C. Government was controlled by white suburbanites. Walter Washington, a black man, of course, was mayor, but almost all of the department heads were—well, I don't know about numbers. I'd have to go back and look at the numbers, but so many, one [agency] after the other, was dominated by whites, usually white men, and also many of the top jobs filtering down until you get to the clerk's level.

BETTY KING: Yeah.

ED MEYERS: Even there, if they were good-paying jobs, you'd find them to be suburban and whites had those jobs. So, we put out this report called "The Discriminatory Dozen: The Good, Bad, and the Ugly." And the ugly were the 12 worst agencies, the most offensive agencies in terms of what they did. I mean, you probably have heard a lot of what was said, that MPD [DC's Metropolitan Police Department] was the occupational army coming in. So, it was a white-dominated government, and that was a big step towards changing that, getting the [*Washington*] *Post* on our side. And it's now a different government.

BETTY KING: Do you remember—we'll come back to the campaign.

ED MEYERS: Okay.

BETTY KING: But do you remember in January of '79, at the time of the inaugural, the only—as I recall, the only member of the mayor's staff or the cabinet of Walter Washington, who served at the pleasure of the mayor, was the City Administrator.

ED MEYERS: Is that right? I don't remember that, but that's—how did it change?

BETTY KING: And all of the rest of them were just, you know, government employees and had the kind of rights [of tenure, etc.] that—you know.

ED MEYERS: Okay. Well, let me interview you. How did that change? [Laughs.]

BETTY KING: I want to get—I'm trying to find somebody who can reinforce my impression—

ED MEYERS: Oh, yes. Okay. Right.

BETTY KING: —that it was—you know, that it was a very careful—first, Marion appointed deputy mayors over certain [departments or areas of government]—you know, so that there was somebody that he knew and trusted and who knew Marion's vision. And then there were various moves to get people to take early retirement or—

ED MEYERS: Just about every job I had in that government was serving at the pleasure of the mayor.

BETTY KING: Yeah. Me, too.

ED MEYERS: Meaning you could be fired at any time. I think there might have been one civil service job—or whatever you call it—in there, but all the rest served at the pleasure.

BETTY KING: Yeah. But serving at the pleasure of the mayor didn't exist except for the City Administrator when Marion came into office and was part of his reform of the, you know—

ED MEYERS: And as long as we're detouring, there's one thought that I would like to get out on the table here, and that is racial perceptions of Marion Barry.

BETTY KING: Okay.

ED MEYERS: You know, just like you ask a white person about MLK [Martin Luther King, Jr.]. The first thing that person is going to say nonviolence. You know, he achieved his goal without hurting too much the rest of society. That's the main thing. Of course, you ask a black person, it's going to be jobs, education, equality, you know, social justice, racial justice, integration, what have you. It's the same with Marion Barry. If you ask a white person, if the topic comes up, it's almost obligatory. Teeth will clench. Eyes will narrow. Not people that we know, Betty.

BETTY KING: No, I understand.

ED MEYERS: But, generally speaking, out there, and so you have to have the venom. It's pretty much obligatory, and then it will pass, and the clouds will move away, and it's a nice day again after they get that out of their system.

BETTY KING: The whole Vista Hotel [when Barry was arrested].

ED MEYERS: Yeah. The crack pipe thing, how the government fell apart, how we were the laughing stock of America and the world, the whole thing that we've all heard so many times.

Now, sometimes I'll say to them, just for fun, "Well, he was a liberator, you know," and there's a little bit of satire in my own voice saying it. But they may not know that there was any satire. Liberator! So, you get one of those "ROFL" [Rolling on the Floor Laughing] kind of responses. But if you talk to many—not all, but I would almost have to say most black people in D.C. who are aware of what's going on, they would say that, "Yeah, he's a liberator."

I mean, take myself. You know, I'm a businessperson. I'm thinking of one person, and she would say, "We were excluded. It was somebody else's business world. We couldn't play, you know. Now I can play, and I've done quite well in my life. And I earned it. I worked hard for it, and I built this business, and it's thriving today. It's multimillion dollars," and you hear that story over and over again.

BETTY KING: But what she's in effect saying is that she's had that opportunity because the door was open for her by Marion Barry.

ED MEYERS: Minority Business Enterprise initiatives and just making sure the contracts went not to cronies. I mean, maybe there was some of that during the drug scene. I don't know. Because it got to be fairly loose, you know, all over, as Tom Sherwood [co-author of *Dream City*] chronicled. But for the first couple terms, it was tight in the sense that you had to earn that job, but you are definitely a player—

BETTY KING: Yeah.

ED MEYERS: —and we'll find a way to make it happen for you, and there's going to be competition. And you're not going to get a sole-source contract.

And it's the same for everything else. I've got to say a couple things here about Marion, and that is you take a company and you take a black person over there sitting at a desk in the corner. Well, that person may be a nice person, but he's not—I don't see any leadership skills there. You know, he or she is not going to step up and do anything magnificent. You know, a good person, we need to keep that person on the job, and we're not going to kick him out or her out on the street. But, in the [Barry] administration, that person got to be the head of some department, a big job with 100 people, and they were magnificent. And that was an eye-opener for a white person like myself to see it time after time after time and time, and you got to thinking, well, this is the way it could be in all of America if we had a little bit of an open mind and open heart, you know.

BETTY KING: Yeah.

ED MEYERS: But we don't have that. We still don't have it.

BETTY KING: No.

ED MEYERS: And so another thing—so those people were liberated, the leaders, but regular staff employees were—got a job. That's liberation.

BETTY KING: Yeah, of course.

ED MEYERS: If you're excluded from these civil service jobs, I mean, look at the benefits. Look at the pay. Many people may sneer at those kind of jobs, but they're great jobs.

BETTY KING: They are.

ED MEYERS: I don't care if it's a sanitation worker or a clerk working for somebody or a midlevel professional job. It's important.

BETTY KING: Well, of course, particularly Marion created opportunities at the director level for black public administrators.

ED MEYERS: Yeah.

BETTY KING: And, you know, he found some wonderful people.

ED MEYERS: No question. Women, gays.

BETTY KING: Men, everybody.

ED MEYERS: Men.

BETTY KING: And people of color—

ED MEYERS: Yeah.

BETTY KING: —given opportunities that in most municipalities—or since we're a state, a county, and a municipality, most governments, any of those levels, there weren't that many, at that time, black public administrators at the top of the heap.

ED MEYERS: Right. So, it was huge, the difference. So, when you hear that potentially ironic word "liberator," that is so funny to the white community. It has an entirely different meaning in D.C. from the black community.

BETTY KING: Absolutely.

ED MEYERS: Anyway, all of those things that—we can move on to the campaign now, but all those—I still have all those papers and so forth from those days, if anybody is interested.

BETTY KING: You know, you need to talk to GW [George Washington University]. Let's talk about that at the end of the interview.

ED MEYERS: Okay, will do. Okay. Now, are we ready to talk about the campaign?

BETTY KING: Whatever you—

ED MEYERS: The campaign itself, I want to say this. It's that Marion Barry was an amazing campaigner.

BETTY KING: Absolutely.

ED MEYERS: And Ivanhoe and he would sometimes, before going out to a community meeting, play games with each other about—like pick a street nearby. Who do you know on that street? What are they doing these days? Not names. Not just names, but who they are, who lived in that house, and who—you know, what jobs they had or what their needs are.

BETTY KING: Amazing.

ED MEYERS: And they'd go up and down the whole street. They'd try to beat each other in that regard.

BETTY KING: That's wonderful.

[Laughter.]

ED MEYERS: And I remember early on working for Marion. We went out to Lorton Prison to close down what was called "The Hole," which was a disgraceful holding bin without sanitation facilities, just a putrid, stinky place for kids, teenagers, young ones. And they'd sleep on these nasty cots, if they had those. And so, we went in there. We wrote a letter and got the head of that facility fired, that kind of thing.

BETTY KING: This was before the campaign or after he won?

ED MEYERS: Well, it was all a quasi-campaign.

BETTY KING: Pardon?

ED MEYERS: It was all a quasi-campaign.

BETTY KING: No, but this was something that was before he was mayor, in other words?

ED MEYERS: Yeah.

BETTY KING: Yeah, okay.

ED MEYERS: Yeah, on the Council. And so, the story I'd like to relay to you is after that was over, we were going back to the car, and all these residents—"prisoners," most people call them—of Lorton were lined up along the fence, shouting out to Marion. So, you know, we went over and talked, and I figured that would be the perfunctory, "How are you doing? Glad to see you," you know, "Be Strong" kind of thing. But it was so much more than that. It was "Billy, what are you doing in here?" "Well, I'm sorry. I"—"What did you do?" "Well"—"Why did you do that? Does your aunt—what does your aunt think about that? Well, what are you going to do with yourself?" And it was not just one person here and there. It was up and down the line, person—man after man after man after man.

BETTY KING: Amazing.

ED MEYERS: It was like one out of every four, I would say, he knew, and that is amazing.

BETTY KING: Absolutely.

ED MEYERS: And the other story I should tell is on the campaign itself, and it relates closely with everything I've been saying, a debate with Walter Washington and Sterling Tucker [Chair of the D.C. Council, also running for Mayor in 1978 against Barry and incumbent Mayor Washington] at some church somewhere. Don't remember. And so, Marion was late, as he often was.

BETTY KING: Always.

ED MEYERS: And so Walter Washington and Sterling made kind of a political hay out of that and said, "Do you want a mayor like this? You don't. You need reliability. You need trustworthiness. You need somebody you can count on, and just showing up whenever you feel like it is not what a mayor should do."

And so, *boom*! The doors bust open, and in walks Marion Barry. And on the way down to his podium, which was standing there empty and being mocked at by the other two, he says, hello to everybody by name, not just "Hello, Mattie. How are you doing?" It's, you know, "How's that new job working out? How's your puppy?"

[Laughter.]

ED MEYERS: I mean, just little things here and there, which showed everybody in the whole room that he knew—it was his crowd, you know. Whether they had made up their mind to vote for them before that or not, they were going to vote for him afterwards. And so, he gets up there. You know, he walks up to the stage, and meanwhile, Sterling's and Walter

Washington's jaws were just dropping, just looking at this whole scene. And so, he just comes up, and it was like he was the only speaker at that point and just said, "Good evening. I'm glad to be here," and he starts going into a little talk before getting on with the debate. And so, it was his crowd, his room, his debate.

[Laughter.]

ED MEYERS: But my point of it all—and I'd just wrap up with this—is that campaigning was not just coming up with a nice slogan and maybe having a few good ads and so forth. It was person to person to person to person. It was personal.

BETTY KING: Absolutely. And that '78 campaign, that was the critical difference.

ED MEYERS: Yeah. And Anita, I think was—Bonds—was the deputy campaign manager.

BETTY KING: She was.

ED MEYERS: And she had her index cards. I'll never forget those index cards, and she'd know where to find them. Nothing was—we didn't even know about computers, I guess.

BETTY KING: Well, we certainly didn't have them.

ED MEYERS: Yeah, we didn't have them. And so, everything was on her fingertips, literally. The District of Columbia was on her fingertips.

BETTY KING: Yeah, exactly. So, the campaign is over. Marion wins, and he comes into the District Building as the mayor. And what was your role there?

ED MEYERS: I was a Special Assistant to the Mayor for Finance for the first several months.

BETTY KING: And then?

ED MEYERS: I became Deputy Director of the Department of Finance and Revenue under Carolyn Smith.

BETTY KING: Okay. So, that was a department where the previous director was moved out.

ED MEYERS: Yeah.

BETTY KING: Do you know what happened to him? Did he take early retirement? I am trying to reconstruct how Marion created—

ED MEYERS: I know.

BETTY KING: —all this space for people to serve at the pleasure of the mayor.

ED MEYERS: I don't know how he did it. I know this is being recorded, but your party that you gave, a wonderful party, a wake for Marion Barry, somebody did piece together that story for me. I'm trying to remember who it was. Lorraine—

BETTY KING: Lorraine Bennett?

ED MEYERS: Yeah. She would know.

BETTY KING: She was working there at one—I interviewed her. I'll have to follow up with her and see if I can find out.

ED MEYERS: However he did it, and then the deputy resigned. And so, I got to move into that job.

BETTY KING: Yeah, great.

ED MEYERS: And all of these people who leaked information when Marion Barry was—

BETTY KING: Chair.

ED MEYERS: —Chair of the Committee on Finance and Revenue now were working with me as colleagues.

BETTY KING: And they were glad to see you.

ED MEYERS: They were glad because we didn't have to—we didn't have to look around to see who was talking to us, you know. We didn't have to do it surreptitiously. We could just plan ahead.

BETTY KING: Right. Great. Yes. Lorraine Bennett was working in that office, and she dropped a dime on something that was going on there. She told the story in her interview, so she was one of the people who was providing inside information.

ED MEYERS: I never talked to—I probably did. There were a bunch of people.

BETTY KING: Well, I think she was fairly far down in the pecking order.

ED MEYERS: She might have filtered some information through. I'm sure she did.

BETTY KING: I'm sure she did too. In fact, she testified that she did.

ED MEYERS: W well, that's great. Good for her.

BETTY KING: And so you remained at Finance and Revenue for how long?

ED MEYERS: A couple [of years]—I guess until the campaign for [against] Patricia Roberts Harris.

BETTY KING: 1982.

ED MEYERS: Right, that one. So, then I went over to become director of Communications for D.C.

BETTY KING: Oh, I remember that.

ED MEYERS: And we put together data on the government, then, now, jobs then, jobs now, housing then, housing now, whatever all the data were, and so that became—David Abramson was in the campaign [handling advertising]. He took all that and made it—posterized it.

BETTY KING: Yeah. Yeah, I know he did. Unfortunately, he's not alive anymore to be interviewed, which is too bad.

The Office of Communications, Florence Tate and Kwame Holman went in, in '79, as the mayor's press secretary and assistant press secretary, but that only lasted for about a year or two.

ED MEYERS: Okay.

BETTY KING: And I don't recall that he had a press secretary again after that.

ED MEYERS: Well, he had Annette Samuels.

BETTY KING: Oh, that's right.

ED MEYERS: And she actually did the [press relations] work.

BETTY KING: When did she come?

ED MEYERS: She did almost all of the—she was good at her job. She did all of the press relations, just about. I just worked with the government [agencies].

BETTY KING: Okay. And she was in place when you came in?

ED MEYERS: No. She came in a little bit later after I came in.

BETTY KING: Okay. Because I think there was a period in which Marion didn't have a press secretary.

ED MEYERS: There might have been one, yeah. Yeah, there was.

BETTY KING: And the communications—

ED MEYERS: That's true because I filled in a little bit there myself.

BETTY KING: Okay. I thought that was so.

ED MEYERS: Yeah.

BETTY KING: That there was a period. I don't think he always had a press secretary. I think sometimes he did it himself or the Communications Office plus his immediate staff did it.

ED MEYERS: Yeah. I don't know.

BETTY KING: I was just trying to—I've talked to so many people. I'm trying to reconstruct things that I've forgotten myself.

ED MEYERS: What was Linda Wharton Boyd—What was her job? I mean—

BETTY KING: That was very late, in the third term.

ED MEYERS: Okay.

BETTY KING: Okay. Are there any other anecdotes or observations on the Barry years that you'd like to make?

ED MEYERS: That's pretty much the highlights. You know, it fell apart, of course, and that was—it was heart-wrenching because in a lot of people's minds, that's what he's remembered for.

BETTY KING: I know. Particularly the young people who weren't around in the '70s and '80s, all they remember is the Vista Hotel. Yeah.

ED MEYERS: And I know I mentioned this to you before, but there's a song that I think of that captures Marion Barry so very well. It's by Solomon Burke called "The Other Side of the Coin," and before you judge, if judge you must, look at the other side of the coin. There's a lot of good words that were almost written for Marion Barry: "If I had done all the things I had done that people say I've done, I'd be in the ground or on the run." Well, he's in the ground.

And so, I mean, the other side is not really—there's so many people who just don't forgive, and they're never going to, you know. So, the other side gets submerged, but we have to—it should have shown people that leadership can be done as well or better by minorities—in this case,

African Americans—than whites. Marion, of course, like every other black person you know had the expression, "You have to be twice as good if you're black"—

BETTY KING: Yeah.

ED MEYERS: —"to get the respect of the white community." And there was a time when he was at least that much [better]. I alluded to it earlier, but I'm talking about not just the dashiki guy. He wore dashikis actually on the job in the Council, but I'm talking about just truly building relationships. Just as I mentioned all those community people and all those wards, with the business community, person by person by person—

BETTY KING: Yeah.

ED MEYERS: —listening, sitting down, understanding their needs, going with those needs, not opposing. They weren't the enemy. They were part of D.C., critical to the success of D.C.

BETTY KING: Yeah.

ED MEYERS: You don't fight people who can produce prosperity for the District.

BETTY KING: No, certainly not.

ED MEYERS: And so it was a building—a consensus-building effort, and I think looking back, people think that he was the strong leader who dominated the scene. I don't really get that impression so much as thinking of Marion Barry before things fell apart again, of course, [I think of him] as a great consensus builder, stepping back, letting other people have their say, taking credit, winning them over on not his side but our side, to build [DC] up higher and higher and better and better.

BETTY KING: Yeah.

ED MEYERS: And that's leadership.

BETTY KING: Indeed. On that note—

ED MEYERS: Yep.

BETTY KING: —thank you very much.